TEACHING ENGLISH

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EDITORIAL

THE PELICAN IN ITS PIETY

"He borned in Bandipur"

A harassed college lecturer handed us a list of sentences which had been troubling him to the point of something like despair, at the Conference of Teachers of English in Hyderabad, humming like the drone of bagpipes below the music of the conference. As he listened to the reassuring speeches and to papers on the influence of the Upanishads on T. S. Eliot or the affinity between the Transcendentalists and Indian philosophy, he would from time to time look into his heart and bring up another worm: "He is lived in Bandipur." A lecture on the modern novel, a discussion of the various syllabuses in English in Indian universities and in would go his beak, pelican-like, into his breast and produce: "He was died in Bandipur." Modern poetic drama came under review and the faces all assumed respectful, rested expressions, their pre-occupations forgotten, but this restless beak plunged again to wring a drop of blood from the suffering breast: "Drama was existed in ancient India." The introduction of courses in Linguistics, or the strengthening or weakening of the pre-occupation with Middle-English or Anglo-Saxon in the M.A. courses was broken into by the discordant, irrelevant and mocking sound as of a motor-horn in the middle of a concert, "Farfrae was loved Lucetta." The care-worn face of this good, sacrificial man plunging his beak into his breast and wincing at the pain haunted the sessions; in went the beak, out spurted the blood: "The college was constructing by the Fathers."

The pelican in its piety, feeding its young with its own life blood, is one of the myths we are most reluctant to allow modern zoology to deprive us of. It is more than this, the persistence of the myth in our consciousnesses is a sign of the wish of the individual, especially the teacher, to dramatize himself in the role of a saviour sacrificing his own life and strength for the sake of his children or pupils. Fortunately visits to the zoo have taught us that the pelican catches fish for its young and brings them home in the big bag under its beak as long as they are small and helpless. But it is a good pedagogue; it soon teaches its

young to fish and fend for themselves. Conscientious, worrying teachers all over India are staggering around under burdens they cannot carry unaided; their pupils are shrugging their shoulders and enjoying the notoriety of making such interesting mistakes that their teachers cry aloud and groan sacrificially. Some of them groan scientifically and collect evidence of their suffering in neat piles for other sufferers to wonder and exclaim at. We have taken this need in the human breast for sympathy seriously enough to publish in this number an article in which a teacher has classified the various thorns that lacerate his body according to their shape and the depth they penetrate. The thorns that torment him most are spelling mistakes. It is valuable to do this work of analysis so that we bring the bogey within reach. If we see it clearly displayed on paper, we find it less terrifying; it becomes a finite enemy we can tackle. These instances may guide us in diagnosing psychological disturbances, they may prepare us for the worst that students can offer, they may help us to prepare remedial exercises, they certainly help us to face an ugly situation calmly in limiting it and defining it.

We must not forget, on the other hand, that steps taken at the high school or college level to eradicate learnt mistakes make great demands in time and energy. Equivalent energy expended earlier might have prevented the mistakes ever being learnt. If we allow ourselves to be obsessed by lists of horrifying mistakes in the high school and the college, we may lose sight of the fact that really effective remedial action must begin at a much earlier stage; we may begin to regard the mistakes, once we have classified them, as part of the natural order of things; once we have allowed ourselves to become indignant or wounded we may regard them as enemies we must struggle with. They are not our battle, however, we are not required to engage them in single combat; if we did, we should certainly be unsuccessful. A great deal of the difficulty lies in the disillusionment and helplessness of the pupil; he feels he has done a great deal of work, he has tried to attend to his teachers and understand what they were saying, but the result has been disappointing. He has learnt to look to his teacher as to a saviour, he has not learnt how to rely on himself and his own energy and on the help and energy of his friends. Language learning has been a private inner passive transaction unrelated to the facts of the pupil's world, something done to him by the teacher. It is strength, therefore, that he lacks.

The answer to the teacher who worries, and is tempted to despair, at the mistakes his pupils make in grammar and spelling,

is to show him how to hand over to the pupil responsibility for his own work. It is to show him how to train and guide rescue teams of students to attack and get rid of wrong language habits, to find in team-work a way to restore fallen morale. It is to give the individual student confidence and guidance, so that he can escape from habitual errors through his own efforts and acquire new and sound language habits in manipulative exercises which include the copying of a great many correctly spelt words and correctly arranged sentences. *An article dealing with *remedial exercises* takes the place of the question box and tools of the trade section in this issue, because the questions received recently have mostly been of a general nature asking for information on this area of work. The answer to the problem is not for the teacher to try to save his pupil from himself, offering up his strength and his energy like the pelican feeding her children with her own life-blood, but for him to help the pupil to feel a *sense of responsibility* for his own progress and to develop an interest and a stake in the process. In short, to grow up and become strong. This means that the teacher must be prepared for some of his pupils to remain indifferent and to fail, but at least they will have learnt not to rely on an outside agency to save them from the results of their failure. If the teacher takes his pupil's mistakes too seriously he is taking over some of the responsibility which the pupil ought to carry himself; he is keeping the pupil weak and helpless. This flatters the teacher but ruins the pupil. The teacher is human and finite, he is not and cannot be a saviour, he must be a modest person, knowing his own limitations who guides his pupils to realize their own strength and relatedness in co-operative effort.

* It has been decided, after all, to postpone the publication of this article to the next issue, as, on making up the proofs, we find we have too much material.

TEACHING A POEM

By F. L. Billows

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A THIRD YEAR POEM

Introduction

So far poems for the fourth and fifth years of English have been dealt with in this series. Now it seems time to deal with a poem suitable for the third year, especially as this will give an opportunity to concentrate on the principles involved, without being distracted by adventitious details. For poems simple enough for this stage, which are genuine poems, it seems to me best to go to the books of folk songs. From several which I often teach I have selected "Lord Lovell". This poem seems suitable for teaching at this stage on several counts, it has a simple charming story which is easy to follow, it has a strong pictorial element, it has plenty of repetition of quite normal sentences that can be immediately made use of in natural speech, and it has a true poetic quality which helps to cultivate in the pupil poetic ways of thinking. A teacher who thinks of starting to teach poetry in this way, would find it a good poem to begin on. Is it necessary to repeat that the suggestions given here are to be regarded as a shelfful of tools for the teacher to pick up and use as he can, and as he needs them? One teacher has asked if it was really necessary to use film-strips, films and drawings on the blackboard to explain to boys who have read of the exploits of Shivaji, what a castle is. The answer is, of course, "No". In using these visual aids one is not necessarily explaining the meaning of anything, one is firstly ensuring that the idea "castle" is in the forefront of the mind of the pupils when one begins to read the poem, that there is no loss through failure to visualize the central element of the imagery—one creates the opportunity to talk about the central symbol or image of the poem—and, secondly one is giving the pupil something to look at while the poem is read. The individual pupil will, in any case, conceive in his mind's eye the image he has devised from his own experience, though we may hope that it will not diverge too much from what we suppose the poet had in mind. Films or film-strips would only be shown if the teacher wished, in the regular plan of his teaching, to do some language teaching with the help of such aids; then he could

ensure that the concept "castle" was a familiar one by the time he came to teach the poem by using these particular films or film-strips some time before; but that would only be a by-product of his language work. I myself have never used either a film or a film-strip, nor have I told the class to read a simplified version of "Kenilworth" or "The Talisman", before teaching the poem "The Castle"; some teachers have told me, however, that the idea of a castle is remote from the experience of their pupils and to these teachers I have recommended the use of some such visual aids or supplementary reading. They have told me that this solved their problem and I pass on the idea in the hope that it may help others.

I only mention what I had assumed to be obvious to reinforce my point now, that in teaching "Lord Lovell", or any other poem, the teacher should begin by a discussion of the background to the poem. The first aim of the teacher in this preliminary discussion is to find out what his pupils know of the subject; he must build his teaching of the poem on the basis of their knowledge and experience; to do this he must first know what he can assume this to be. The second aim is, by discussing the subject, to bring it within the scheme of knowledge, or the belief system, of the class. The teacher may decide that the real subject of Wordsworth's "Daffodils" is not daffodils at all, or that the subject of Yeats' poem "The Hawk" is not really a hawk, but Wordsworth and Yeats both built their poems round—or crystallized them out on—what they took to be commonly understood and familiar concepts. The poems fail if these concepts are not familiar to the reader before he begins to read; they also fail if the concepts, though familiar, are not brought clearly enough into the mind's eye to fill the field of vision and act as a focus to the thought, as the words of the poem are passed through the mind. To rely on the imagination to do the work unaided is to expect too much of the average pupil as long as the language of the poem is unfamiliar. In my experience, even the intelligent, imaginative pupil who knows the language well is helped in his visualizing if we take the strain off his imagination by putting a rough, schematic sketch in front of him: we are helped to learn concentration by practising successful concentration, not by failing to achieve concentration. The picture on the blackboard is, thus, more of an aid to visualization and concentration than an explanation of meaning. In the course of the discussion, from what he discovers of his pupils' knowledge and experience in the field covered by the poem, the teacher decides what he will be obliged to set up in their minds and establish; everything else he gratefully leaves out. The ques-

tion, therefore, as to whether a picture of a castle is necessary to teach "The Castle" by Edwin Muir, can only be decided in the presence of a particular class, and this decision has to be made afresh for every class which the teacher takes.

The drawing which the teacher contrives upon the blackboard of Lord Lovell stroking his milk-white steed and being minced up to by Lady Nancy Bell is there as much for fun as for necessity, and to make it unnecessary for the teacher to explain much. If most of the words in the poem, and the concept of a knight's riding away nominally on pilgrimage—but, as we may suspect, more probably to see the world and enjoy some adventure—are familiar to the class, the role of the drawing is to amuse and to fix the attention on the setting. In addition, one boy may be Lord Lovell, another the milk-while steed—an arm extended to be the stroked nose—and another, or a girl if there is one available, be Lady Nancy Bell. Those who take the parts are both showing comprehension and helping the rest of the class to follow what is happening; the more backward members of the class are being helped into the words by the drawing and the action; the brighter ones are realizing their conception of the words in them.

LORD LOVELL

1. Lord Lovell, he stood at his own castle gate,
Stroking his milk-white steed,
When up came Lady Nancy Bell,
Wishing her lover good speed, good speed,
A wishing her lover good speed.

2. "Oh, where are you going, Lord Lovell?" she said,
"Oh, where are going?" said she.
"I'm going, my Lady Nancy Bell,
Strange countries for to see, to see,
Strange countries for to see".

3. "When will you be back, Lord Lovell?" she said,
"When will you be back?" said she.
"In a year or two, or three at the most,
I'll return to my Lady Nancy, Nancy,
I'll return to my Lady Nancy".

4. But he had not been gone but a year and a day
Strange countries for to see,
When a strange thought came into his mind;
Lady Nancy he would see, would see,
Lady Nancy he would see.

5. He rode and he rode on his milk-white steed,
Till he came to London Town,
And there he heard a church bell ring,
And the people all mourning around, around,
And the people all mourning around.

6. "Oh, what is the matter?" Lord Lovell, he said,
"Oh, what is the matter?" said he.
"A lady is dead," an old woman said,
"And they called her the Lady Nancy, Nancy,
And they called her the Lady Nancy.

7. Lady Nancy, she died as it might be to-day,
Lord Lovell, he died as tomorrow.
Lady Nancy, she died of pure, pure grief,
Lord Lovell, he died of sorrow, of sorrow,
Lord Lovell, he died of sorrow.

8. Lady Nancy was laid in St. Bank's church-yard,
Lord Lovell was laid in the choir;
And out of her bosom there grew a red rose,
And out of Lord Lovell's a briar, a briar,
And out of Lord Lovell's a briar.

9. They grew and they grew to the church steeple top,
They grew till they grew no higher;
And there they entwined in a true lovers' knot
For all lovers true to admire, admire,
For all lovers true to admire.

First, the teacher makes up his mind which of the words or the ideas in the poem are likely to be beyond his pupils' reach. He may happen to know this, because he has been teaching them for some time, but he is wiser not to presume too far. He can kill two or more birds with one stone, however, by discussing the general subject of the poem, before he begins to read it; he can introduce the vocabulary easily and use it naturally by talking about Lord Lovell standing in front of his castle and stroking his horse, but he can also find out how far such a scene belongs to their imaginative furniture and can be visualized by his pupils; from this he can decide what he may leave to their knowledge and imaginations. Probably he will find that some can do more than others; these, then, will be his confederates in presenting the poem to the others. From these, profiting by, and according recognition to, their richer background and quicker recognition, he can select his Lord Lovell, his milk-white steed, his Lady Nancy Bell, his old woman and even—mindful of the hilarious absur-

dities of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*—his castle gates, his church-bell, and his church. There are teachers who feel they must regard poetry as a holy mystery. For these, Stephen Spender's words are intended: "If we put poetry on a pedestal we find we have put it on the shelf." If it is to be a permanent and all-pervading possession, it must be brought as near to the pupils as it can be brought and mixed with—and linked to—their experience and interests at every point. They must be in it and feel it, act it—be it. The tenderness and beauty of this poem is not incompatible with a certain amount of fun—even tomfoolery—; it is, perhaps, part of the charm of the poem that the growing of the red rose out of Lady Nancy's bosom and the briar out of Lord Lovell's, though he was laid in the choir and she in the churchyard, is both touching and amusing. We find ourselves laughing with the rose and the briar rather than at them in their efforts to do right by Lord Lovell and Lady Nancy, as well as symbolise their triumphant immortality. There is high spirits in the poem, shown in the verse pattern and in the superlative hyperbole of the conclusion; and—much as we solemn adults may disapprove—high spirits in children mean romping and even horse-play. There is usually no need for the teacher to import this element into it, however; it is in the poem and in the children, and evolves naturally out of the friction between them, or remains dormant. A middle-aged teacher romping purposefully in front of an embarrassed class is not fun, it is unfun—or even anti-fun.

Having satisfied himself in a discussion accompanied by a sketch on the blackboard of a castle with prominent gates, before which a figure seems to stand stroking a white horse, approached, trippingly, by a female figure, that the class has grasped the setting, the teacher proceeds to read the poem through once, not too slowly. He then reads the first two lines :

> Lord Lovell, he stood at his own castle gate
> Stroking his milk-white steed, .

and points to the figure standing before the castle gate, on the blackboard; he then strokes a member of the class or his own hand, and asks each boy to stroke the boy on his left, and then to stroke the boy on his right. If there is any uncertainty after this, he can get one boy to come out in front and stroke the desk, the blackboard, a boy's head, his shoulder, his back—an opportunity to remind him of the words for these—; the stroking and being stroked are not explanations, they are a quick way of associating word and concept to the point of their association being instinctive, without an unnecessary effort of the imagination being

called for. The teacher may quickly rub out the horse and substitute, in turn, elephant, camel, donkey, cow, to show that all are potential steeds, finally putting back the horse as the most likely steed. If he thinks it will help he may speak of Vishnu's steed the swan and Shiva's steed the ox.

When up came Lady Nancy Bell
Wishing her lover good speed, good speed
A-wishing her lover good speed.

The teacher wishes one of the quicker pupils good speed by shaking his hand and saying "Good-bye", showing him out of the room. As many members of the class are then wished good speed as required to familiarize the expression.

"Oh, where are you going, Lord Lovell?" she said,
"Oh, where are you going?" said she.

This should present no problems, and nor should the rest of the verse.

"I'm going, my Lady Nancy Bell,
Strange countries for to see, to see
Strange countries for to see."

No class has ever asked me what the word "for" is doing in these sentences; I just pass it over, and it comes to be accepted as part of the pattern of the poem. I ask what countries are likely to be meant, to remind them that the story is set in England; we mention France, Italy and the Mediterranean countries, possibly asking ourselves if Lord Lovell went on a crusade or a pilgrimage to Egypt and Palestine.

"When will you be back, Lord Lovell?" she said
"When will you be back?" said she.
"In a year or two, or three at the most
I'll return to my Lady Nancy, Nancy,
I'll return to my Lady Nancy."

We then ask ourselves why he said he would return to his Lady Nancy, and conclude that he will marry her. We ask if they are not already married, but note that in the first verse Lord Lovell is referred to as her lover and not her husband; so this proves that they are not yet married.

"But he had not been gone but a year and a day
Strange countries for to see."

"How many days are there in a year and a day?" I ask and get the answer 366 unless the year was a Leap Year when it would be 367. Or does a year and a day mean a Leap Year? No, it probably means that he began to think of Lady Nancy when the same day of the next year came round, then it was the first day of the new year. This can be made clear, if necessary, by saying that

he left on 1st May one year and thought of her again on 1st May the next year.

A strange thought came into his head:
A strange thought came into his mind:
Lady Nancy he would see.

We distinguish between "head" and "mind", reading sometimes "head" into the line, but returning to "mind". Then I ask what he rode on. Some may remember "the milk-white steed", others merely "a horse". It is an opportunity to re-read the first verse again and see that he is still riding the same horse as he went away on:

He rode and he rode on his milk-white steed
Till he came to London town
And there he heard a church-bell ring
And the people all mourning around, around
And the people all mourning around.

I usually draw a swinging bell, as the focus of the verse, and suggest mourning in my face. I talk a little about mourning customs to fix the word "mourning" and give it associations, if I have not made sufficient use of it in my introductory discussion.

"Oh, what is the matter?" Lord Lovell, he said,
"Oh what is the matter" said he.
"A lady is dead," an old woman said.

I then generally ask the class to guess who might be dead, and the answer is almost always "Lady Nancy", and then I complete the verse.

Lady Nancy she died as it might be today
Lord Lovell he died as tomorrow.

I say that if Lady Nancy had died on a Wednesday, Lord Lovell died on a Thursday, or if she died on a Thursday he died on a Friday. I ask the class what they think Lady Nancy died of. They can usually say because Lord Lovell had gone, or hadn't come back, or had not written a letter or thought about her for a year and a day. We bring these feelings to a focus in the word "grief". I then ask why Lord Lovell died and we agree that he must have died because he had forgotten Lady Nancy, because he had come back too late to see her, because he saw that she had died of grief, and we summarize all the feelings that come from this situation in the words "grief" and "sorrow".

I then draw a sketch on the blackboard of a handsome church with chancel—shown by being a little less lofty at one end—and a tower with pointed spire at the other.

Lady Nancy was laid in St. Bank's churchyard and I sketch in a mound to be her grave.

Lord Lovell was laid in the choir

and I indicate his grave in the choir or chancel of the church.

And out of her bosom there grew a red rose. I draw a schematic but indubitable plant growing out of her grave and presumed bosom,—I indicate my own bosom—and, if there is any red chalk, show roses on it.

And out of Lord Lovell's a briar.

I draw a similar plant growing out of his grave, but with no flowers and tell the class that there are only leaves and thorns, especially thorns on a briar. We can, if we think it worth while, ask members of the class to bring thorns and roses into the next lesson, or, with foresight, have asked for them to be brought into this.

They grew and they grew to the church steeple top. I draw them growing up on to the roof of the church, and then round and round the steeple, in opposing spirals, till they twine together:

And grew till they grew no higher
And there they entwined in a true lover's knot.

I entwine my fingers.

For all lovers true to admire, admire,

and I sketch in a few figures in the churchyard craning their necks at the rose and the briar twining together at the top of the steeple. I ask the class whom and what they most admire, cricketers, film stars, Nehru, and finally we agree that we admire Lady Nancy Bell; and possibly we can find some admiration, too, for Lord Lovell, for being so faithful as to die of sorrow for her.

I read the poem through once more quickly, and ask for volunteers for being Lord Lovell, Lady Nancy etc. The next reading is shared by the class; not only are the words of Lord Lovell, Lady Nancy and the old woman spoken by their representatives, but the whole class repeats the last line of each verse. As soon as possible members of the class read the narrative parts too. When the poem has passed entirely into the hands of the class it will be repeated, as a joint operation, whenever convenient. It will never again be necessary to devote a whole lesson to it, but it will soon become the property of everyone and, in being well-known, will come to be understood more and more completely. When the poem is a familiar part of everyone's mental background the teacher will be able to quote lines to illustrate other poems and the pattern sentences such as "Where are you going?", "When will you be back?", "In a year or two, or three at the most, I'll return to my Lady Nancy" etc. will be put to work in the ordinary language of the pupil. A composition can then be set, in which the pupils are required to write a similar story in their own setting.

this will bring them to think through the poem again and realize the essentials of the story afresh in a new setting.

The chief aim of the teacher throughout all this work is to present the poem to the class, with as little explanation as possible, directly and dramatically, not allowing himself to wander into irrelevances, yet looking for connections throughout the poem, with the pupil's experience and background, in such a way that its relevance to the whole of his thought and experience is clearly seen. An explanation, a blackboard sketch or question which would be an impertinence in one class may be necessary in another; the class and its needs, no preconceived plan or estimate, should determine the course of the lesson once the teacher has made up his mind in general how he will present it. After it has been learnt, as quickly as possible, the teacher should take every opportunity to discuss it, so as to heighten awareness of it gradually.

ESSAY-WRITING

BY D. H. SPENCER,

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IN Volume III, No. 3 of this magazine Mr. J. G. Bruton published an article on Composition, devoted chiefly to the first two years of an English course. My intention here is to carry his excellent suggestions a stage further and discuss the same problems as they apply to the last years of an English course. The children have already learnt to write simple paragraphs, on personal or at least concrete themes, they know something about punctuation, and they may now be considered ready to tackle the question of essay-writing proper.

The basis of the essay is of course the paragraph, just as the basis of the paragraph is the sentence. To begin with, further practice should be given in writing single paragraphs, pointing out that each sentence in a paragraph is concerned with the same theme, or the same aspect of a single subject. It is often a good idea to give the children the first sentence, which should be a kind of key-sentence, like the corner-stone of a building, so that they have something on which to build further sentences. The topics chosen must still either be personal, or within the range of personal experience; it is too early to start on abstract subjects.

At first the subjects for these paragraphs should be chosen from the class readers, so that the pupils are already familiar with the vocabulary to be used. Examples can be put on the

blackboard. The teacher must be careful to use only simple sentences, mainly of the subject—verb—object kind, and not inadvertently introduce a construction with which the pupils are not yet familiar. Six or seven sentences are quite enough for this kind of paragraph. If the class readers do not provide enough material, then the teacher must look round for subjects within the range of the children's experience e.g. "A street in a town", "The street where I live," "The house I live in," "What I do on Sundays."

This kind of simple paragraph can be used to revise certain tenses. If the title, for instance, is "What I did last Sunday" or "What I shall do next Sunday", then the majority of verbs used will have to be in the past or future tense respectively. At a later stage a title such as "What I would do if I had a hundred rupees" would revise the use of conditional sentences. (Do not say: "— if I were a millionaire". A million rupees is beyond the scope of our, let alone the children's imagination!) But this is a minor aspect of the problem and no great importance need be attached to it.

When a number of one-paragraph "essays" have been practised in this way, with careful preparation beforehand, the teacher can introduce simple reproduction exercises. For this you will need a small number of very short, but interesting or amusing stories. They can usually be found in the pages of weekly and monthly magazines, or Sunday newspapers. You tell a story two or three times in class, ask a few questions to make sure it is understood, and then make your pupils write it down in their own words. Set a time-limit of 5 or at the most 10 minutes. At the end some of the pupils can be asked to read aloud what they have written. If the stories involve the use of dialogue—as many of them do—then you must make sure first that the children know the rules of punctuation for transcribing dialogue. At the appropriate stage you can tell a dialogue story and ask for it to be reproduced in reported speech.

By the last year of a secondary school course the pupils should know enough English and be mature enough in their general knowledge to start practising the complete essay. But—and this is a point which is too often ignored—it is hardly fair to ask pupils to write an essay in a foreign language if they have not already been taught to write one in their mother tongue. It is no use adding difficulties of procedure to the already considerable difficulties of language. The wise English teacher,

therefore, will co-ordinate this part of his work with the teacher of the mother tongue. The English teacher should accept any system of essay-writing already introduced by his colleague and base his own instructions for English essays on that. He might go further and use more or less the same subjects. It is perhaps not a very sound idea to use the identical subjects because that will lead to straightforward translation; but it is perfectly possible to choose subjects on similar topics, which will lessen the amount of original thinking required of the class. Remember that we are only interested in linguistic, not literary, ability.

Subject to this consideration i.e. to paying due regard to the practice in essay-writing of the teacher of the mother tongue, the English teacher should lay down a fairly rigid pattern; something like this: a total of 5 paragraphs, divided up into an introduction, three paragraphs of "subject-matter", and a conclusion. Allowing 70 to 80 words for a paragraph, the total length should be between 350 and 400 words. The pupils must be taught to draw up a thorough plan for each of the 5 paragraphs before they begin to write the essay itself. If there is no plan the pupils tend to lose sight of the subject, to put down their ideas in an illogical order, to ignore paragraphing, and to make a variety of other egregious mistakes.

A plan for an essay might look like this:

A School Picnic

Para 1.

Introduction.	Key-sentence:	"Early in November the Headmaster announced that he was arranging a picnic for Standards X and XI."
The arrangements.	Points to mention:	Date of picnic—places to visit—transport—things to eat and drink—time of departure and return.

Para 2.

Subject-Matter.	Key-sentence:	"We assembled at the school at 8 a.m. on Sunday morning."
The journey.	Points to mention:	Seats in the bus—route out of town—things seen on the way—arrival.

Para 3.		
Subject-Matter.	Key-sentence:	"We left our food in the gardens and went with our English master to see the Temple."
The morning.		Description of the Temple—time spent there—walk back to the gardens—very hungry—the picnic.
Para 4.		
Subject-Matter.	Key-sentence:	"The second visit on our programme was to a dam."
The afternoon.	Points to mention:	Route to the dam—walk along the top of the dam—view of the lake—the scenery—return to the buses.
Para 5.		
Conclusion.	Key-sentence:	"We got back into the buses at 5 p.m."
The return.	Points to mention:	The way back—everyone tired but happy—we sang some songs—arrival at the school.

For the first few weeks or months of this final stage the teacher can always provide a plan of his own for the pupils to follow. Various alternative plans may be discussed in class. The pupils may be asked to write a plan one week and the essay based on that plan the following week. But every method must be used to emphasize the importance of a plan, of thinking before you write, and then putting your thoughts in a logical order and in simple language.

At the beginning, the essay subjects chosen will always be descriptive. Towards the very end of the school course it may be possible to introduce more difficult kinds of essay subjects—topics which demand a reasoned analysis of advantages and disadvantages, causes and effects e.g. "The Struggle for Indian Independence", "The Uses and Abuses of the Press". The difficulty with this kind of essay is usually one of general knowledge, and it is no use introducing it—irrespective of how much English the pupils know, unless they are mature enough and intelligent enough to deal with it. If there is any doubt, it is better not to attempt it at all. An even more difficult kind of essay is the one which depends almost entirely on the writer's imagination e.g. "Tradition", "The Holiday Spirit". Such topics are best left to the University stage.

THE ART OF PLAY WRITING

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Part VI

Grouping and Movement Production

To be really effective a good play needs to be well produced and so it may be helpful to conclude this series of articles on playwriting by one on production.

Grouping is one of the most important aspects of production. Here in India there is a popular tradition that actors should stand in a straight line and speak directly out to the audience. This may suit a stylised poetic drama, but it is quite unsuitable for the realism of most modern plays. For this a different technique is necessary and a study of the principles of stage grouping will help a producer to bring the play to life.

The grouping of characters on the stage should be planned before the first rehearsal so that when the actors meet they can be told exactly where to stand and when to move. This saves an enormous amount of time and nervous energy, and the actors get the impression that the producer knows his job. To do this it is a good practice to insert pieces of thin paper into the copy of the play, and opposite the dialogue, draw diagrams of the stage, marking in the characters and indicating the changes of position with an arrow. There needs to be at least one diagram to every page as otherwise the arrows get so entangled that the diagram becomes impossible to follow. The front of the stage is called "Down Stage" and the back is called "Up Stage". Right and left are the actor's right and left as he faces the audience. If actors and producers know these terms it saves much time and confusion.

The most important factor in planning the grouping is the need to focus attention on the most important character. The producer should work through the play underlining the character who is holding the chief attention at any given moment. He should notice the moments at which the attention shifts to some-one else, as these are the moments when the grouping needs to change.

The usual way of focussing attention is to place the dominating character up stage at the apex of a triangle. The other characters can then look up at him and so direct the audience's gaze. The triangle can be of any shape or size, but, unless a

symmetrical effect is deliberately aimed at, it is better to avoid the isosceles. From this it will be seen that an up-stage position is more important than a down-stage one. Even a few inches can make all the difference. This triangular technique means that the characters are not directly facing the audience. They are facing each other which is more natural, but as all important speeches are made up-stage the angle of vision will not be much more than 25 degrees.

Grouping is symbolic. A character isolated by circumstances or emotion should be isolated in position. Detachment can be indicated by a position outside the triangle. A character whose loyalties are torn can stand between the two competing groups and show by the focussing of his head, shoulders and feet to which party he feels most drawn at any moment.

There is an old saying that an actor should never turn his back to the audience. This is quite wrong. Not only is the turning of the back necessary to make an exit up stage, but it can have a highly symbolic effect. A back can express isolation, disapproval and uncontrollable emotion more effectively than a facial expression. Nevertheless it is true that no long important speech should be made looking up stage.

Different parts of the stage create different atmospheres. For instance a love scene between a couple who are facing opposition is best played in the lonely centre of the stage. A homely and secure love scene can be played down right or down left where the corner of the stage provides a comfortable intimacy.

Furniture can aid symbolic grouping. A table or chair standing between two people who are having an argument can emphasise the division between them as well as providing an object to lean over, tilt, or thump.

Furniture raises a further point which is the need for a variety in height. To have the actors all standing or all sitting at the same time soon becomes monotonous. Some can stand, some can sit, while others can perch on a table. This is not only more pleasing to the eye, it can also be an alternative method of focussing attention. The higher the head-level the more dominating the position. Thus an actor can focus attention on himself merely by standing up, and equally can fade out of the limelight by sitting down.

Grouping should always be attractive. It should be possible to freeze the actors at any moment and find them placed in a well-balanced design. Much can be learnt about this from the study of famous paintings. It is best to avoid a repetition of any grouping unless a deliberate echo-effect is sought. Different

parts of the stage will assume importance at different moments of the play but in general it is best to spread the actors well over the stage. In setting a crowd scene the actors should be arranged so that they do not mask (i.e. cover) each other nor should they be spaced symmetrically. If the entrance is well blocked this will give the impression of a further crowd off stage.

Movement attracts attention. From this we can learn the importance of stillness. It is astonishing how difficult people find it to stand still and remain natural, and amateurs are given to wandering about aimlessly as they speak. This is most distracting, and even meaningless gestures should be ruthlessly eliminated.

Normally it is wisest not to move during a speech. Occasionally words can be emphasised by an advance on an opponent, or a bang on the table. In this case the words and the movement need to be accurately synchronised. If it is essential to move in the middle of a speech, in order for instance to prepare for an exit, or to alter the focus point, then the movement can be made on the less important lines. When one actor is speaking other actors should, as far as possible, avoid moving, and it is better for only one actor to move at a time. Of course none of these are rigid rules and circumstances frequently arise when they can wisely be ignored.

Movement has to be planned with many things in mind. Sometimes it consists of actions necessary to the story. This includes exits which need to be prepared for. A dramatic exit frequently involves the complete crossing of the stage, and nothing is more fatal for an actor than to find himself trapped behind another person or a cumbersome piece of furniture.

As we have seen, altering the focus of attention is another reason for movement and so is the need for symbolism. When, for instance, two people quarrel, they may tend to come together in a head-on collision, or they may drift apart to the opposite sides of the stage. If angry men both turn and move away from each other at identically the same moment the effect is apt to be comic and unless this is the producer's intention it is better to move them on different lines. This moving towards and away can apply to objects as well as people. It may be a door or a window, a piano, a picture or a clock. Such a move can direct the audience's attention to the inner meaning behind the words. Movement is also emphatic. A bang on the table has already been referred to. Far more emphatic than this is a pause. A moment of silence preceding or following a remark

gives it greater importance, and a move is a simple method of creating this. A gesture achieves the same effect and thus movement and gesture form a kind of punctuation throughout the play.

There are a few simple techniques of stage movement. One is that it is best to begin and end a movement with the up-stage foot forward. In turning, turn towards the audience not away from it. Unless the actor knows beforehand the number of steps he is going to take it is easy for him to get left on the wrong foot and a turn can then result in a very ungainly twist of the legs. Inexperienced actors have a habit of turning round to look at a chair before they sit on it. A more graceful and equally secure method is to feel for the chair with the back of the leg and then sit without hesitation. The easiest way of turning an actor into a clown—and there are plenty of clowns in Shakespeare to practise on—is to advise him to break all these rules with impunity.

Effective movement needs to be perfectly timed, and this needs a lot of rehearsal. To move on just the right word, to wait just the right length for a pause, requires experience. This is equally true of dialogue and is bound up with the whole question of pace.

Next to grouping, pace is the most important thing a producer has to study. A play is like a piece of music. Some pieces, such as a light comedy, go fast, others move slowly, but all require variety of pace. The producer must know just when to speed and when to slow down. Although this article has been concerned with movement, it might be as well to include here a small warning with regard to speed in dialogue. This is not achieved by the actors speaking so fast that they cannot be heard, but by closing the gaps between the speeches so that each speech cuts into the next.

Changes of speed can be charted into the script together with the grouping and this will form a further task for the producer before the rehearsals are called.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SPELLING DISABILITIES OF ENGLISH AND INDIAN CHILDREN

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I. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Of all the mistakes children make in written English, misspellings are perhaps the most conspicuous. Yet the

magnitude of the problem of spelling disability does not seem to have been fully realised. An English educationist now working in India, with whom I happened to discuss some of our educational problems showed surprise when I remarked that spelling was one of the serious difficulties of Indian children; and he refused to believe that it was so with English children too. Yet it has been borne out by my investigations.

Four years ago an investigation was made into the spelling disabilities of the entrants and leavers of a secondary modern school in Birmingham, England.[1] The present study, made on similar lines, was undertaken to supplement it, and to make a comparison between English and Indian children.

II. NATURE OF THE INVESTIGATION

This study was undertaken in the Model School, Trivandrum, India. Model School is a high school for boys, one of the best high schools in Kerala State. 100 boys of the initial class (Form IV) and 100 boys of the final class (Form VI) were subjected to this study.

On 8 July 1954 the entrants and leavers were asked to write an essay on "Our City". The time given was one period of 40 minutes. It was a free composition written under examination conditions. The spelling mistakes were enumerated and classified, and compared with those of the group studied in England.

This study is very similar to the one made at Birmingham. The children there also wrote a free composition on "My Best Day's Outing". The group there consisted of 203 children including 121 entrants (57 boys and 64 girls) and 82 leavers (40 boys and 42 girls). As there are only boys in the Model School, the present comparison will be only between the entrants and the leavers, not between the boys and the girls too as in the other study.

The two schools are comparable in age, and they are nearly so in general attainments. But there is naturally some difference in the standard of English, for whereas English is the mother tongue of the Birmingham children, it is a foreign (and a third) language to the Trivandrum children, whose mother tongue is Malayalam, a language that is entirely different from English. This marked difference is slightly attenuated by the fact that on the English side the children studied, being of a secondary modern school, are not the best boys of the age group, as their average

[1] Vide my paper on "A Comparative Study of the Spelling Disabilities of the Entrants and Leavers of a Secondary Modern School" in *Educational Review* (Journal of the Institute of Education, Birmingham University), February 1955, pp. 134-141.

I. Q. is only 92; and on the Indian side the children studied belong to one of the best schools in the State. It is unfortunate that owing to the non-availability of Intelligence Tests in Malayalam the I. Q. of the Model School children could not be assessed for comparison with the English children. Still it will not be wrong to assume that their average I. Q. is not less than 100.

III. NUMBER OF MISTAKES

The total number of mistakes made by the Indian children is 2,377, which gives them an average of 11.9 mistakes. The length of the essays varied greatly, ranging from 44 to 503 words, the average being 193.5 words. The number of mistakes per 100 words written is 6.1 The leavers have written nearly double the number of words, and though their mean number of mistakes is higher than that of entrants, they have made less mistakes per 100 words.

To make the comparison easier, the figures for the Birmingham school have been converted to make the number of pupils the same in both schools. Such a comparison shows that the Birmingham children have written longer essays and made less mistakes. Out of a total of 54,880 words written by the Birmingham children, there were 2,292 mistakes, which means that the average length of essay was 274.4, the average number of mistakes 11.5, and the number of mistakes per 100 words written 4.2.

The following table gives all the details about the mistakes by the entrants and leavers of the English school and the Indian school.

Name of Group	Name of School	Total no. of words	Average no. of words	Total no. of mistakes	Average no. of mistakes	No. of mistakes per 100 words
ENTRANTS	English	23,250	192.6	1,139	11.4	4.8
	Indian	13,682	136.8	1,094	10.9	7.9
LEAVERS	English	33,640	411.0	1,157	11.5	3.4
	Indian	25,015	250.8	1,283	12,8	5.1
WHOLE GROUP	English	54,880	274.4	2,292	11.5	4.2
	Indian	38,697	193.5	2,377	11.9	6.1

IV. Nature of Errors

The Model School children made 2,377 spelling mistakes, which account for 2,509 errors. A word of explanation is necessary to distinguish between the terms "mistake" and "error" as used here. For example, the word "theatres" has been written as "theators" and "theator's". The former consists of one error (viz. Phonic spelling), and the latter consists of two (viz. Phonic spelling, and the use of an apostrophe when not necessary). So the misspelling "theator's" will be counted as one mistake, but as two errors.

The errors pupils made were classified into 13 types as follows :

1. Phonic spelling
   e.g. Museum—muesium
2. Wrong use of capital and small letters
3. Omission of letters
   e.g. colleges—collegs
4. Substitution of letters
   e.g. and—ang
5. Addition of letters
   e.g. can—cane
6. Doubling of letters, including
   (a) Doubling when not necessary
   e.g. evening—evenning
   (b) Not doubling when necessary
   e.g. supply—suply
   (c) Doubling the wrong letter
   e.g. bazaar—bazzar
7. Transposition of letters
   e.g. foreign—foregin
8. Errors due to mispronunciation
   e.g. situated—sitivated
9. Anticipation and perseveration of letters
   e.g. Cochin—Chochin
   library—librarary
10. Confusion between homonyms
    e.g. their—there
11. Wrong use of apostrophe
12. Association and confusion with other words
    e.g. cantonment—contentment
    Travancore—Trivancore.
13. Miscellaneous.

The following table shows the distribution of the errors.

Figures (in percentages) are given for both the English and Indian schools.

Nature of error	ENTRANTS		LEAVERS		WHOLE GROUP	
	English	Indian	English	Indian	English	Indian
1. Phonic Spelling	20.7	34.5	24.3	35.1	21.4	34.8
2. Capital & Small	2.3	20.4	1.7	14.1	1.9	17.2
3. Omission	17.8	14.4	18.5	18.4	18.1	16.5
4. Substitution	6.1	8.6	5.4	7.2	5.6	7.7
5. Addition	8.2	5.7	6.9	6.4	7.6	6.1
6. Doubling	12.4	3.9	11.8	5.7	12.1	4.9
7. Transposition	5.5	3.2	3.0	2.9	4.3	3.1
8. Mispronunciation	2.4	1.6	1.6	2.6	2.0	2.2
9. Anticipation & Perseveration	1.5	2.5	1.3	1.7	1.4	2.1
10. Homonyms	4.1	1.5	5.0	1.5	4.4	1.5
11. Apostrophe	13.7	0.9	14.8	2.0	14.1	1.5
12. Association & Confusion	4.5	1.4	5.2	1.4	4.8	1.4
13. Miscellaneous	2.0	1.5	2.5	0.9	2.2	1.2

V. DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

As the seriousness of the problem of spelling disability has not been generally realised, and as few scientific studies have been made to assess the extent and nature of the problem, I considered it useful to make an investigation into the problem in England and in India, and to make a comparative study of the results. There are ever so many ways of investigating the problem; and "the chief methods of measurement of spelling ability", as C. M. Fleming[1] points out, "have been those of dictation and correction or recognition of misspelled words." I thought that instead of giving Dictation and Spelling Tests which force children to attempt to spell unfamiliar words, it would be better to test them in a more natural and practical situation—a free written composition, which is more "lifelike", being akin to the writing situations of practical life, and to see how they would fare in such a situation. I consider this as a more useful and reliable estimate of the spelling abilities of children.

In a free composition children are free to write only what they know. Yet both the studies show that they do attempt many unfamiliar words.

There is no boy who has made no mistake. The number of mistakes of the Indian children varies from 1 to 42, and of the English children from 1 to 56. The average number of mistakes

[1] Fleming, C. M., *Research and the Basic Curriculum.*

is about the same—11.5 for the English and 11.9 for the Indian. The Indian boy makes about 2 more mistakes per 100 words written, the figures being 6.1 for the Indian and 4.2 for the English.

Comparing the entrants with the leavers, the latter make less mistakes in both the schools. The English entrant makes 4.8 and the leaver 3.4 mistakes per 100 words. The corresponding Indian figures are 7.9 and 5.1.

The first thing that strikes one on looking at the table showing the distribution of errors is the preponderance of Phonic spellings. 34.8 per cent of the errors of the Indian boys belong to this category. For the English school the figure is 21.4. In spite of this difference, in both cases the largest proportion of mistakes is caused by Phonic spelling.

Other studies made in England and America give figures round about 25 per cent. The Indian boys have outstripped all records. But this is not surprising because the language background of the Indian boy is different. All Indian languages are phonetic, the more so Malayalam, which is written exactly as it is read. So naturally they use phonic analogies when they do not know, or are doubtful about, the correct spelling of a word. And in this composition they were faced with the necessity to guess the spellings of certain difficult words—words like "museum", "aquarium" etc. without a reference to which a description of the city would be inadequate.

In three types of errors there is seen to be a striking contrast between the two groups. They are

(1) Wrong use of capital and small letters,
(2) Wrong use of the apostrophe, and
(3) Doubling.

Whereas 17.2 per cent of the errors of the Indian boys is due to wrong use of capital and small letters, it accounts for only 1.9 per cent of the errors of the English boys. That is a big difference. So too is the case with the wrong use of the apostrophe, which is a major mistake among the English boys (14.1 per cent) whereas it is almost insignificant with the Indian boys (1.5 per cent). Errors connected with the doubling of letters also show considerable difference. The English children (12.9 per cent) make about three times as many errors as the Indian (4.9 per cent). There is also an appreciable difference between the two groups in the extent of the errors connected with homonyms, and association and confusion, where the English children show greater disability. There is no very marked contrast with regard to the other types of errors, except that

whereas the English leavers are superior to the entrants in types 5,6 and 8, the Indian leavers are inferior to their juniors.

The marked difference between English and Indian children in certain types of errors appears to be mainly due to the difference in their language backgrounds. With regard to the errors in the use of capital and small letters, the absence of such a distinction in their mother tongue accounts for the considerably larger percentage of errors of this type among Indian boys. Until the English habit is properly established, such errors occur; but there is a progressive diminution of such errors with advance in learning, as may be seen from a comparison of the figures for the Indian entrants and leavers.

The chief reason why English children make more errors in the use of the apostrophe is that they have more occasions for the error. English children frequently use abbreviated forms like "I'll", "doesn't", "haven't" etc., where the omission of the apostrophe or its misplacement will be an error. But Indian boys usually write "I will", "does not", "have not" etc. instead. It is in this particular type of error connected with the use of the apostrophe that the greatest difference has been noticed.

The Indian practice of pronouncing according to the spelling, though very un-English, has its advantages too. It often helps spelling. Following the practice in Indian languages, doubled consonants are pronounced with double the force. Just as pronunciation follows spelling, spelling follows pronunciation also. Trained in the alphabetic and phonic methods, Indian boys apply their ways to English also. So doubling when not necessary, and not doubling when necessary are both comparatively infrequent among Indian children.

On the whole, the leavers, both English and Indian, are superior in spelling ability to the entrants, for they write longer essays and make a smaller percentage of errors.

Some of the educational implications of the results of the study may now be noted. The practice of guessing the spelling should be totally discouraged. Each English word has to be studied as such, and not by analogy with other words. Though in many cases phonic analogy is possible, it is a dangerous thing if pupils are encouraged to practise it. Let them, therefore, learn words first, and then only use them. Indian children will naturally find the spelling problem more difficult owing to their different language background, but that only points to the need for greater care to avoid errors of this type.

Even apart from the misspelling of unfamiliar words, there is the greater tragedy of misspelling ordinary, easy, known words.

This is caused by hasty and careless writing. Omission, addition, substitution, transposition, association, confusion, anticipation, perseveration etc. all result from this. To avoid these the boys must be made to write with care and attention. The practice of reading the essay over after finishing writing it has to be insisted upon. Many spelling mistakes could thus be corrected by the children themselves. Thus careful writing helps prevent misspellings, and re-reading helps correct misspellings.

Whereas formal spelling lessons and drilling of spelling rules are monotonous and uninteresting, and therefore unhelpful, the teacher may very well point out the common mistakes which his pupils make, and help them to avoid them. It would be more beneficial to pay individual attention to the children. Modern diagnostic and remedial techniques would be very useful for backward spellers; and teachers would do well to be acquainted with them.

A teacher who makes a scientific study of the spelling disabilities of his children will make many discoveries which will help him in tackling the problem and turning out better spellers.

VI. Summary of Conclusions

(1) Spelling disability is a serious problem in written English.

(2) Children do attempt to spell unfamiliar words even when they are free to avoid them.

(3) There is no boy among the groups studied who has made no spelling mistake.

(4) The Indian boy has made more mistakes than the English.

(5) In both groups the leavers show less spelling disability than the entrants.

(6) Among the types of errors there is a preponderance of phonic spellings.

(7) The Indian group shows considerably greater disability in phonic spelling, and in the use of capital and small letters.

(8) The English children show considerably greater disability in the types relating to apostrophe and an appreciable inferiority in those relating to homonyms, and association and confusion.

(9) The teacher of English will do well to

(a) discourage the guessing of spelling,

(b) insist on writing with care and attention, and

reading the written matter over and making the necessary corrections,

(c) pay individual attention to poor spellers, and

(d) make a scientific study of the spelling disabilities of his pupils.

THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

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SECTION I

GRAMMAR AND ENVIRONMENT IN THE LANGUAGE-LEARNING PROCESS

1. Introductory

IT has become a fashion nowadays to say that languages, whether native or foreign, are or can be taught without grammar. It has been equally a fashion to say that a language, as a matter of fact even a foreign language, is or can be taught interestingly without suitable and natural environment.

(*i*) Grammar has no place in Fundamental English! Dr. P. B. Ballard, M.A., D.Lit., states that grammar should be left out of the syllabus or given a very subordinate place, at least in the work of the junior school (*F. E. Junior Series, Teachers' Book III*, p. 17 under "Form"). The same holds good more or less with the English syllabus of the senior school. With reference to the advocates of pure grammar or grammar, his remarks are worthy of note in this connection. He does not make any distinction between functional grammar and formal grammar since they are more or less the same. The difference between the two is only in degree, not in kind. He states "yet the kinship (of pure grammar, i.e., functional grammar with the old grammar of parsing and analysis which for a third of a century cast a blight on the elementary schools of England, is obvious to those who have seen the doctrine in practice." (*F. E. Junior Series, Book I*, pp. 9-10). Language is a habit to be formed and

social in its function and so it should be taught by speaking and imitating in the social context. Dr. Ballard's *Bargery Stories* are instances in point wherein the child's environment is predominant and they are interesting and stimulating on that account. Dr. Ballard has many followers both in the East and the West in this aspect of language teaching. What Dr. Ballard has said with reference to this teaching of English as a mother tongue, is applied indiscriminately to the teaching of English as a foreign language, in India. In short we may say that we want language without its grammar. We may write the same thing symbolically thus : Language minus Grammar.

(*ii*) Environment, social and natural has no prominent place in the New Method English. Dr. Michael West, M.A., D.Lit., emphasises the vocabulary aspect of language (i.e. a part of grammar) as against social or natural environment. He states with reference to his New Method Readers "The story has been so rewritten as to contain no ideas difficult or unfamiliar to the non-European reader. The main purpose is word-study. Mere reading for content should be subsidiary to these objectives," (Reader VII, Preface). Dr. West has a good number of sympathisers and followers both in the East and the West. Dr. Jean Forrester, B.A., Ph.D., has revised Dr. West's New Method Readers and she also composed her own Deepak Readers more or less on similar lines but based on structures. And Dr. R. L. Mehta considers Dr. West's New Method Readers as model readers. Shri R. L. Mehta when dealing with the characteristics of a good reader states, "subject matter must be relevant to the pupil's enviroment", (i.e. it must be familiar to the Indian learner). He adds, "A good deal of time that should go for explaining new words and their meaning is taken up in describing English customs, habits and games," if the subject matter or environment is English. (*The Teaching of English in India,* p. 57). *The Draft Syllabus of English for Higher Secondary Schools* recommends "English should be treated as a skill subject and not a content subject." To put the same thing in brief we may say that we want English without its natural environment or content. Symbolically

expressed it stands as follows: English minus Content.

2. Environment in the Learning Process

Language is social in its significance and function and so it can be best learnt only in its own social context. An investigation recently undertaken in my college (S. T. College, Belgaum) into the reproduction of the English vocabulary of pupils of Standard VIII[1] that they had unconsciously assimilated, i.e. under natural conditions before the teaching of English was actually begun in school, has revealed that the assimilation of language-material has actually taken place in a social context. The pupils that score high in the English vocabulary collections are those who are fortunate enough to have contact with the English environment in the form of (*i*) contact with English-speaking people, parents, guardians, friends, etc. (*ii*) English Gramophone records, (*iii*) English Broadcast speeches, (*iv*) English Talkies. The language (English) is best learnt in its natural or social context. We may attempt to put the learning process schematically thus: The child: English Environment: (English) Learning Process.

Environment naturally plays an important part in the learning process of any language—even of the mother tongue, because the word is the medium through which the idea (or meaning) is connected with the object. If a child is taught a word merely with reference to meaning or idea without reference to the object, i.e. environment, he becomes a visionary, as his knowledge is not based on reality. When the child learns in the environment he naturally connects the word with the object and his knowledge is realistic. For the word is as much connected with the idea as with the object. At least in the early stages, the child should be given an opportunity to learn with reference to objects i.e. in the social context. The intimate connection of name (word) and form (object) with meaning (idea) is well known. This can be shown as under :—

Idea		Word		Object
or	<	or	>	or
Meaning		Name		Form
(*Artha*)		(*Nama*)		(*Rupa*)

[1] The vocabulary tests were applied also to Stds. V, VI & VII later on when English was recommended as a subject to be taught in these classes.

3. Grammar in the Learning Process.

Grammar, like environment, has a social import. Grammar is the logic of the language and deals with the laws of speech (word) behaviour (or language) as logic deals with the laws of thoughts for the ideas of a social group. Sounds, sound-groups (words), word-groups in sentences, idioms and phrases, which form parts of grammar reveal traces of social characteristics both in the structure and order of arrangement. Anthropological approach to these linguistic materials is sure to throw much light on this topic. The language structure reflects the social structure and vice versa. Let me illustrate the point. In the business of organizing our experiences, we are necessarily bound within the formal framework of the language (i.e. grammar) as well as by its cultural content. "To us whose experience is severely limited the detailed distinction of the Arabic language with regard to the varieties of names for camels seem hardly necessary. To an Arab, a camel is male and female which we, if pressed, will admit by adding the words he or she or male or female. But the Arab does not by any means let the situation rest here. In his system of symbolic reference i.e. the Arabic language, a brown camel and a white camel etc., are entities quite distinct. The Arab, on the other hand, if forced to discourse on camels in English or Marathi would find our languages sadly deficient" (O. L. Chavarria Agular, *Lectures in Linguistics,* pp. 18-19). Indian languages distinguish between two kinds of water, *Jala* (ordinary water) and *Tirtha* (holy water) which have social and cultural implications. English people and others do not understand these implications. A *Tirtha* case when taken to the Madras High Court puzzled the English judges. The English words 'ice' and 'snow' have no different meanings for us though they are quite distinct in the English environment. Though it is true that there are some points in common between the Indians and the English as human beings, a descriptive grammar of an Indian language (especially South-Indian languages) and English reveal that the area of divergence between them (due to their peculiar environment) especially with reference to essential words like the words of relationship etc. and grammatical structures, which are too wide to ignore need be studied in their suitable environment. The correspondence may be symbolically put thus: English idea: English word: English environment (but not Indian environment). The English idea finds its natural place in the English environment. And the English word, which is its symbolical reference, is meaningful only in the English environment. The English word is a symbolic reference in the sense that it relates the English idea directly to

the English environment. To teach a language through a foreign environment is to transplant it from its natural environment and it is as indirect as to teach it through translation, as some foreign factor intervenes between the language (word) and environment (object) it naturally refers to, which may be shown as under: English word: *Indian word;* English object—Translation English word: *Indian object*: English object—trans-plantation. The transplantation of a language from its natural environment into a different environment, like translation, is undesirable in the language-learning process. Even the sentence structure and order of words in a sentence (in grammatical terminology, called syntax) as we have already said, have a social or racial import. It is significant to note in this connection that the objective-substantive order and subject-verb order in a sentence prevail in our languages that belong to the Aryan group. We consider that the substantive is more important than the adjective and that the actor is more important than action. In a society of Arabs whose language belongs to the Semitic group, which is quite different from our group, a different sentence-structure and a different word-order prevail.

Saya koolus — sufa hāvu — Minum — nāsi (Quran)
Say will fool people amongst the
Fools among the men will say.

The same holds goods with Indian languages and foreign languages (like English) because of different societies and environment.

John	reads	the	book. (English sentence).
Johnanu	Oduttane		Pustaka (Kannada sentence)

We may quote many more instances of this nature. Hence the real correspondence is not this.

English thought-structure : English word-structure :
Indian social-structure

But rather this—

English thought-structure : English word-structure :
English social-structure
or environment.

It is significant to know in this connection that Dr. Handerson B. L. K. M.A. D.Lit. (London) calls his work on English grammar. "The English way" and characterises the English way—by quoting two lines of poetry from Defoe's *Britannica* "Wise men affirm it, as the English way. Never to grumble till they come to pay." He further adds by quoting "Heedless of grammar, they cried "That is him"—*The Jackdaw of Rheims.*

Every good writer has much idiom, it is the life and the spirit of the language.

(*ii*) Grammar has been a great aid in learning a language, especially a foreign language both living and dead. The great writers in English in India are those who learnt their English through grammar. It was the only method of learning a language up to recent times. Granting for a moment, we can master our mother tongue by speaking it constantly, without grammar, the same does not hold good with regard to English which is a foreign language, for there are only a few occasions to speak it. For the complete mastery of it, we shall have to depend upon its grammar which serves the purpose well as a supplement to speaking, reading and writing. The Indian child who starts learning English at an age later than eleven has learnt his mother tongue and its grammar and has formed grammatical concepts some of which can be used with advantage in learning the grammar of the English language. We may formulate the learning process as under:
Native language: Natural environment: Learning process.
Foreign language: Natural environment: Grammar (a substitute environment for Natural: Learning Process.
There is nothing intrinsically wrong with grammar. The present-day hatred towards grammar is due to the reaction against the strong position that grammar held in the school curriculum and cast a blight on even primary schools for centuries. Like all reactions, it has swung to the other extreme and we hope it will not last long. The worst criticism levelled against it, by its critics is that it is abstract and hence uninteresting as it proceeds from the rules to the examples. The inductive grammar which proceeds from examples to the rules removes the edge of contention and solves the problem of interest to some extent. Another objection raised against it is that it emphasises or mainly depends upon reading and writing rather than hearing and speaking. Now reading and writing are as much devices of learning a language as hearing and speaking. A child learns its language by hearing and speaking at an early stage. It has to continue its learning process by reading and writing later on.

SECTION II

GRAMMAR AND ENVIRONMENT IN THE NATURAL METHOD.

4. Natural Method and Environment.

Language is as much intrinsically connected with social environment as with grammar. The language structure is governed by grammatical rules or laws and thrives well in its natural and social environment. To teach a language on the basis of grammar

and in the *social environment* is a *natural* method. There is nothing extraneous about it.

(*i*) "Follow nature" is a sound principle in the learning process as it is in the social process. We accept the teaching of a foreign (English) language by speaking it, i.e., by speech method because "speak and learn" is a natural method even in the case of a foreign language. The English language is learnt best in England by speaking it. English is also learnt best in England in the English atmosphere. That is also a natural method of learning English. Why should we not accept the other part of the natural method, i.e., learning English in an English environment when we have accepted one part of the natural method viz. learning English by speaking it? Of course, we should. For learning English in an English environment is certainly a characteristic of the natural method (E. V. Gatenby, *English as a Foreign Language*, p. 16 (g)). We do not, however, suggest here that it is necessary to go to England to learn English in an English environment. An English environment is seen in the factories, railway and station, post office, radio-stations which we have received from the English people and which may be utilized as situations for teaching English.

(*ii*) Of course, there are limitations. We shall have to introduce some modifications as we have done in learning to speak English by speaking it. We should create an English atmosphere or environment. To create an English environment in the school, the teacher should make it a point (a) to speak in English and to insist upon children speaking in English, (b) arrange English speeches and recitations especially by English people occasionally, if available, (c) arrange speeches and recitations and reading by advanced students and teachers, (d) make suitable use of gramophone or linguaphone records and have broadcasts of English speeches, (e) (i) display English pictures (ii) English apparatus (f) and make English newspapers, English story-books available to students for reading purposes, (g) get prescribed Readers containing foreign subject-matter and environment as far as possible. We should display anything that students are naturally interested in, remembering always that one's aim is the impressing

of the English way of life and the English way of describing things upon pupils. The pupils should be encouraged to look for English words and phrases and English scenes which are to be found in the advertisements. It may not always be possible for us in India to make a separate foreign (English) classroom for language teaching. Let us at least maintain a foreign environment which approximates to "An enclave of foreign soil rather like an embassy" (UNESCO: *Teaching of Modern Languages*). We may formulate the correspondence thus :

English language: English speech : : English language: English environment.

However there need not be any objection to make use of an environment which is common to all humanity—as found in stories like those of *Hitopdesh* and *Panchatantra* and *Aesop's Fables* etc. Such common (universal) environment can be used with great advantage in the early stages of learning English as a foreign language.

5. The Structural Approach and Grammar

(*i*) The Structural method[1] is the most up-to-date method in (foreign) language teaching. Structures or types of sentences that are very useful are a few (about 250) as compared to the unlimited number of sentences, phrases etc., in a language (English). A structure or a frame consists of a sentence or a phrase, a content word of which may be deleted and substituted by another. The items which constitute the replaceable list will tend to be all nouns or all verbs or all pronouns and so on. *The Draft Syllabus of English for Higher Secondary Schools* (The All-India Council for Secondary Education, 1957) strongly recommends the structural approach[2] to the learning of a foreign language (English). It is an approach which is best suited to achieve the maximum amount of work in the minimum time available as at present in India where the aim of the teaching of English is stated to be "A complete mastery (understanding, teaching, reading and writing) of a 2,000 word vocabulary and of phrases

[1] The method is the direct method but the linguistic materials are arranged on the structural basis. Hence it is rather an approach than a method.

[2] English is an analytical language, and the grammatical function of words depends on the position they have in a sentence structure. The relation of words, such as, "on, in, shall, will, have" plays a more important part than content words. Hence the language should be approached through structures rather than through vocabulary.

and idioms commonly associated with those words" within a course of six years (6 periods per week), pp. 10-11.

(*ii*) The structural approach fortunately accepts the grammatical basis of the language. This is really significant that "language without grammar" advocates have retreated, of course, successfully making room for grammarians to regain the lost ground. Every structure embodies in itself an important grammatical point or rule. It is also grammatical in the sense that language materials are graded grammatically. The difference between the structure method and the grammar method is that one deals with the structures which are the finished products of speech (word) behaviour while the other not only deals with structures as finished products but also with the 'How' and the 'Why' of the speech (word) behaviour. As already stated, grammar is the logic of language and as such it is an embodiment of the thoughts and ideas of a race or society, and hence it is social in content. The structure, or the frame, or the form of a language cannot even exist, it must be remembered, without the ideas or thoughts that determine it. May we say *mere structure or form is like a body* without a soul. If the language is to function well and effectively it must have both body and soul. The mastery of both the aspects is a desideratum in the learning process. We may summarise thus:

Structure plus Grammar = Language.

To study 250 structures is tantamount to the study of 250 rules *Since structure* illustrates a grammatical point or rule, of course, arrived at inductively, i.e., after studying many examples and brought under one type. The structure along with the rule that governs it make grammatical point or thought exact and definite. The rule arrived at inductively as in descriptive grammar can be remembered easily. Besides the list of 250 structures of the English language is a small one. Hence the structures and the *rules that govern them must be mastered. If the drilling* in the structures makes the usage firm, drilling of the structures with their rules makes the usage firmer. A man using structures without knowing the rules is like a dumb man eating sugar or like a blind man groping in the darkness.

6. The Structural Approach and Interest.

(*i*) The structural method or *approach concentrates on* a drill of structures and vocabulary building, to the exclusion of everything else. There is nothing (as in the old grammar of deductive type) to arouse interest in children as there is not much scope for including in it the life and culture of the

people (i.e. social environment) whose language we are to study. For, the children are required to devote their sole attention to the language aspect, not to the content aspect. As the structural method attends to one aspect only, it is unsatisfactory to that extent on that account. Besides, the (foreign) structure or form can live and survive and function well only in its own natural environment. A structure or form out of natural environment is like a fish out of water. The same may be symbolically expressed thus:—

Structure plus Natural environment = Language.

The modern Readers in English such as 'An Active Course in English' or 'Ashoka Readers' which give importance to the language aspect, i.e., the structural aspect do not arouse sufficient interest in the children as they present mainly Indian environment with which they are too familiar. Too much familiarity breeds neglect if not contempt. It has been the experience of many teachers that children do not take interest in the stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* rendered into English and they do not care to read them even, since they are familiar with their contents. New (foreign) ideas in the form of pictures, stories and environment as found in Dr. Ballard's Readers (Fundamental English) are not noticed there and as such they cannot supply the required zest to the pupils for study. "Without zest, keenness or interest—call it what you will—very little can be achieved." (P. V. Ballard, *F. E. English Teacher's Book*) The same may be summarized as under (with reference to the English language):—

Structure minus Proper (foreign) Environment > Drudgery.
Structure plus Proper (foreign) Environment > Interest.

(*ii*) The structuralists emphasise the language aspect not the content aspect, because they hold that (a) the aim is to master the foreign language not its contents and (b) the pupils will have to devote their attention to two things (if a foreign environment is introduced) (i) foreign language (ii) foreign environment. There is not much meaning in their contentions. (a) The child need not devote his attention to two things. When he is grasping the (story) contents, he assimilates language-materials also, since the language-materials are inherent in the story-content and vice versa. There is a *samavāya* (inseparable) relation between the contents and the language which is its medium. The process may be formulated thus :—

Medium — Content — *Samavāya* (identity)
(*Shabda*) — (*Artha*)

(b) Some people hold that the linguistic materials must be presented in the immediate environment of the child, not in the

remote, so that he may assimilate linguistic materials easily. What is immediate or what is remote is difficult to decide. Is it physical or psychological? If by "immediate" we mean psychological nearness, not physical, we have everything to recommend a foreign environment in the teaching of English as a foreign language. That environment though physically remote and foreign, if suitable, according to the psychological or mental age of children is immediate. In such an environment the child naturally takes interest. When giving a geography lesson, we have noticed that children take interest in the children of remote countries and foreign environment—e.g. Eskimo children—and easily understand and appreciate their environment in the form of their dress, food, house etc. because they are psychologically immediate to them though remote physically. The linguistic materials even if presented in a foreign environment in the form of foreign stories etc., are easily assimilated, if suitable, according to the psychological or mental age of children for whom they are meant. We may summarise the same as under:—

Language (medium) plus Content (suitable to the mental age) = Immediate

Language (medium) plus Content (unsuitable to the mental age) = Remote

7. Conclusions.

From the above discussion we arrive at the following conclusions:—

(i) Language is the speech behaviour of a particular society which has its own peculiar characteristics and so it is social in content and function. It should be tackled as any other social behaviour in its natural environment as is done in social anthropology.

(ii) Language is inherently connected with its environment and can be learnt best in its own environment, i.e., in the social context, which in other words is termed as the Direct method or Natural method.

(iii) Grammar is also social and cultural in its content as it deals with the laws or the thoughts that govern speech (word) behaviour of a particular group of people and is an indispensible aid to teaching a (foreign) language.

(iv) Mere drilling in the structures will not help us much in learning a foreign language, unless it is supplemented by the laws that govern them though of course arrived at inductively as in Inductive grammar.

(v) Mere drilling in structures is drudgery unless it is cor-

related with the environment (foreign environment in the case of learning a foreign language like English).

(vi) The language structures must be well graded according to difficulties and by types and arranged on a grammatical basis and clothed, in the social environment in the form of stories etc., so as to stimulate interest in children.

What we want to advocate in this article is that the approach to the language should be (socio)—*anthropological* rather than archilogical. The grammar that is meant here is descriptive grammar.

We may summarise:—

THE CHILD : : THE THOUGHT STRUCTURE: THE WORD STRUCTURE: (medium) SOCIAL STRUCTURE.

QUESTION BOX

Question 1. "Arrived in England, Gandhi put himself under the guidance of an old friend of his family, Doctor Mehta, who happened to be living there permanently . . ." I feel "Arrived in England" is incorrect; it should be changed into "Having arrived in England." Is this change correct? Or should the correction be "Arriving in England"?

Answer. The expression "Arrived in England, etc." is not actually incorrect, though it would be more normal to read as you suggest "Having arrived in England etc."

Question 2. "N.C.C. and A.C.C. cadets will have demonstration of their activities at the playgrounds of the school." I feel the use of the preposition "at" is incorrect; it should be "on". Am I right? Is the use of preposition "in" correct there?

Answer. "At" would be correct if the statement is not intended to be very precise, but "on" or "in" would be possible, "in" being more likely if the playgrounds have a high wall and convey to the mind of the speaker a sort of box or container-like effect.

May I also point out that the first part of the sentence should have read "N.C.C. and A.C.C. cadets will give a demonstration etc.?"

Question 3. Are the expressions "yesterday night", "yesterday evening" good English? Should not "last night", "last evening" be used instead?

Answer. "Yesterday evening" is good English. "Last night" is more frequently heard than "yesterday night", partly because yesterday is likely to finish at midnight with a good deal of night left to run on into to-day.

One hears the expression "Yesternight" in India sometimes, perhaps because of its familiarity in Shakespeare, but this is not now normal English usage.